

Govan Mbeki: Tribute or treatise?

(Jacana Media, Johannesburg 2012, 168 pp. ISBN 978-1-4314-0487-2)

Colin Bundy

Glenda Grainger

History

Durban Girls' College

KwaZulu Natal

Written in an energetic and engaging style, Bundy's biography of Govan Mbeki offers the reader an accessible entrée to a fascinating and complex period of South African history, seen through the life story of one of South Africa's great struggle heroes.

Bundy's painstaking research provides a wealth of detail that adds an extra dimension to the historical facts and his use of quotations is both relevant and pertinent. His interest in, and admiration for, his subject is evident throughout – at times, one feels, almost at the cost of academic objectiveness.

The format and presentation of the book is clear and easy to use, with interesting chapter headings, powerful opening sentences, and good use of paragraphs. The clear footnotes, well-organised bibliography and index, and the use of shaded pages for additional information about particular events mentioned in the narrative make the book an accessible source for students of history. However, Bundy's use of emotive language in describing events and people is at times at odds with the balanced prose usually associated with an academic work and his predilection for alliteration sometimes has the effect of rendering the prose self-conscious.

Bundy's grasp of the political canvas against which he paints his subject is evident in his cogent and insightful analysis of the events of the liberation struggle. However, one is never in any doubt that this is essentially a portrait of one of the struggle heroes and, like many commissioned portraits, at times verges on the flattering. There are a number of occasions when conflicting views are swiftly submerged in the overall tide of goodwill, which rings a warning bell about the objectivity of his portrayal of Mbeki.

Bundy's biography reads like a work of fiction and I believe that this will make it a popular resource for history students, particularly those of high school age. However, I would advise those planning to use the book for academic research into Govan Mbeki and this period of South Africa's history to consult other sources as well in order to gain a balanced, unbiased view of the subject matter.

Mapping – Bridging Diversity. Foundation of a European Discourse on History Education. Part 2

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Elisabeth Erdmann, Wolfgang Hasberg (Eds.)

Pieter Warnich

*School for Humanities, Faculty of Education
North-West University (Potchefstroom Campus)*

pieter.warnich@nwu.ac.za

Facing – Mapping – Bridging Diversity, Part 2 is the follow-up edition of a European discourse on history education. This book consists of the contributions of 13 different history didactics authors of the European Union who describe the scientific discourse on history education in their respective countries. In this issue, the contributions of countries such as Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom are acknowledged. The contributions of Bulgaria and Luxemburg are unfortunately lacking.

The respective authors followed a particular framework based on the German discourse of history didactics. With the writing of this book, the scientific point of departure was that history didactics amounts to much more than the mere history lesson and its concomitant teaching and learning methodologies. For this reason, the scope is much wider and the didactic research focuses on the contributions of the historical culture and historical consciousness of particular societies as well. The provided framework serves an important purpose in the sense that it provides important parameters